

December 1988

Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat *Incorporated.*

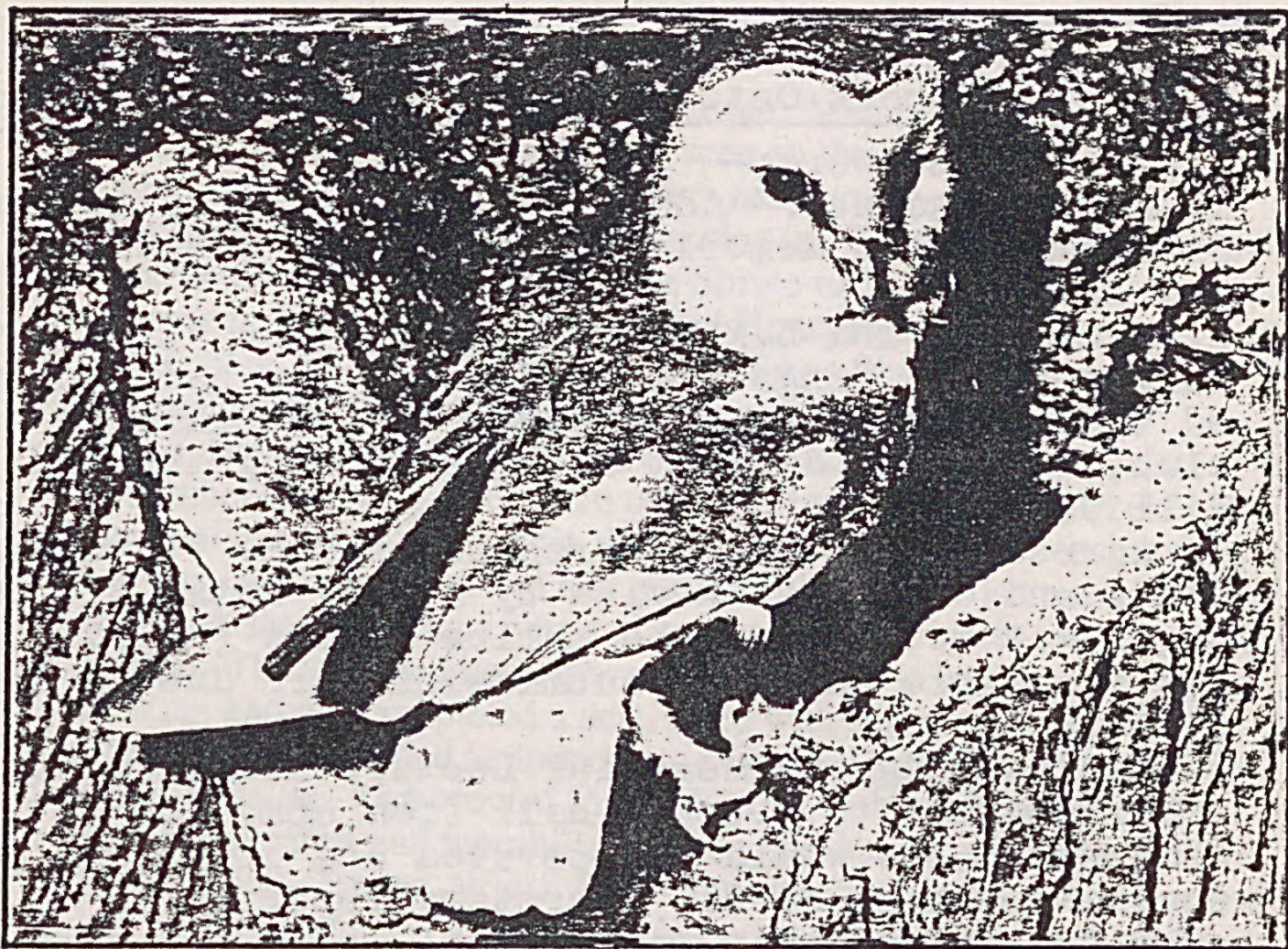
EXCURSION - NEWS SHEET

Meeting : Dec. 2nd. "Barn Owls" - Mr. J. McLaughlin.

Meeting : Feb. 3rd. - "Raptors" - Dr. D. Baker-Gabb.

Excursion : *Dec. 4th. Slatey Creek - K. Hammond.

Excursion : *Feb. 5th. Bostock Reservoir Area. - L. Fink.



President;	Dr. F. Harrap	Ph. 053 301651
Vice Pres.	Miss H. Burgess	312210
Secretary:	Mr. G. Binns	332282
Treasurer:	Mrs. F. Williamson	327631
Editor:	Mr. A. Barlow	413378

Meetings as specified are held at the School of Mines and Industries, Lydiard Street Sth., Art Building, commencing at 7.30 p.m.
EXCURSIONS, AS SPECIFIED, COMMENCE FROM CROCKERS, cnr. STURT AND ARM-STRONG STS., BALLARAT, at 9.30 a.m. for FULL DAY OUTINGS OR AT 1.30 p.m. for HALF DAY*

Looking Forward to 1989.

The Committee would welcome suggestions from new members for the programme of the coming year. Planning the syllabus is always quite a task and recommendations for syllabus items and excursion venues will be gratefully received. Please submit ideas to the Secretary by December 16th.

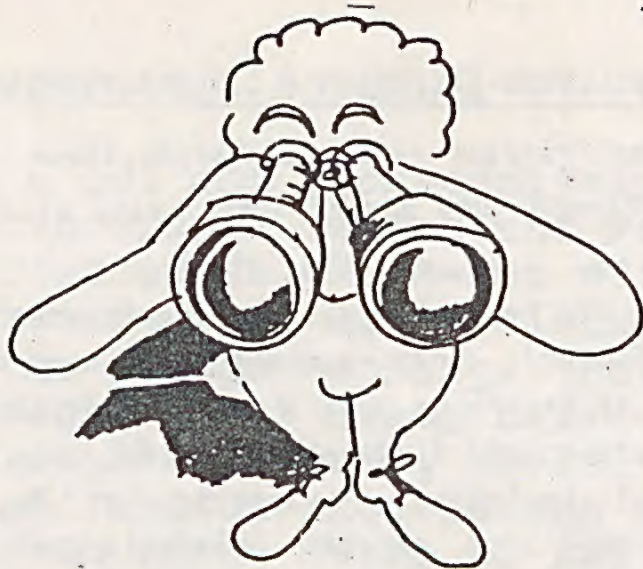
For Your Diary.

1. December 11 Bird Seminar, Anakie Hall, at 1.00 pm.
2. The Western Victorian Field Naturalists Association programme for 1989 has been set as follows.
March 11-13 (Labour Day Holiday Weekend)- Geelong F.N.C. to be based at Ocean Grove Uniting Church camp. Combine with V.F.N.C.A.
September 9-10 Castlemaine F.N.C.
October 21-23 Creswick F.N.C., based at Adekate camp.

Committee Report October 25.

Items treated were:-

1. Correspondence. Additional invitations to the Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture were discussed and listed.
2. H. Burgess and L. Fink reported on the W.V.F.N.C. A. meeting at Wangaratta. The meeting had approved the reimbursment of \$48.00. to the Ballarat club, being the deficit incurred during the Pax Hill Campout.
3. Agreed to recommend purchase of N.E. Victoria study and Checklist Review by A.C.B. Total \$20.00.
4. It was noted that the mallee review (L.C.C.) was available and that submissions are due by Nov 21.
5. Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture arrangements:-
Working bee to prepare hall from 4pm. Nov 4.
A market table would be operated and donations so sought for hall hire. Secretary reported on publicity placements with press, radio and television "community notices" services.



Mt Beckwith Excursion - 6th November 1988

Bird Observations

Discovery of the nest of a Little Cuckoo-Shrike was a highlight of the excursion to Mt Beckwith on November 6th. Members had afternoon tea by the lake, where a Grey Fantail was seen on the nest with a Golden Bronzie-Cuckoo nearby. Later members had their evening meal by the pond and watched a variety of birds coming in. These included Rainbow Bee-eaters, Sacred Kingfisher, Eastern Shrike-tit White-throated Treecreeper, Fuscous and Yellow-faced Honeyeaters, Superb Blue Wren, Restless Flycatcher, Black-faced Cuckoo Shrike, Red-rumped Parrot and others. Common Bronzewing and Eastern Rosella flew overhead, but were seen drinking at other times.

A number of nesting birds were observed by members that weekend and on Ballarat Cup Day. Willie Wagtails had a nest under construction, which was later completed and had one speckled egg on last visit. A Grey Fantail was seen building a nest and another was sitting on a nest near the waterhole. The stem had been woven and attached to a twig. A superb Blue Wren had just completed a nest, lined with soft grey down. A number of nests recorded included Little Grebe, Dusky Woodswallow, Spotted Pardalote, Red-browed Finch, Yellow Robin with two young, various honeyeaters and thornbills. A long bird list included Speckled Warbler, Black-chinned, White-naped and Fuscous Honeyeaters, Hooded Robin, Scarlet Robin, White-browed Woodswallow, White-fronted Chat, Jacky Winter, Mistletoe-bird and Varied Sittella. White-winged Trillers and Olive-backed Orioles were heard.

CAMPBELLTOWN EXCURSION - Oct.9th.1988.

Thirteen members and friends went to Campbelltown on a day that stayed mainly fine until late afternoon and was at times quite windy.

We stopped about 3kms. East of the Black on the Campbelltown - Newstead Rd., initially in the hope of rediscovering *Enostemon Vernicosus* (the Fairy or Bendigo Wax Flower). Some members had seen the plant here, at the Southernmost limit of its range, years ago with Stella Bedggood. Though we couldn't find the plant we discovered a wide range of Monocotyledons (Orchidaceae & Liliaceae) including 3 varieties of Beard Orchid, Great Sun Orchid, Mosquito Orchid and several *Caladenia* species. (For further details see the plant list, kindly compiled by Pat Murphy.)

Birds were fairly limited in numbers both here and immediately after lunch which was taken by a dam in the Sandon State Forest. The highlight for one member before lunch was the probable sighting of an immature Spotted Nightjar which, when disturbed, flew and perched briefly before being lost in the very thick undergrowth.

Crested Bellbirds were well in evidence vocally after lunch but proved to be even more elusive than normal. Also heard but not seen were Fan tailed, Horsfield's Bronze and Shining Bronze Cuckoos and Olive Backed Oriole. A short walk near the dam failed to produce the normally resident Owlet-nightjar.

A move was made to a more sheltered area of open land and here at last we met with some success. A very obliging Pallid Cuckoo perched for some minutes, displaying its bright orange gape. There was a good range of Thornbills including the Yellow Thornbill which, a year or two ago, one could not expect to see in Campbelltown; Weebills were also present.

Rufous Whistlers were widespread as they were near the dam and male and female were well observed. Not all of us saw *Sitella* which moved through quite rapidly. The highlight here, certainly for me, was a male Red-capped Robin. This is an area that I visit quite regularly and it is over 4 1/2 years since I last saw this delightful little bird.

The majority of the group finished the afternoon at a lignum swamp, just North of Campbelltown. This was very rewarding with a good number of duck, including Pinkeared and Australian Shoveller. White faced and Pacific Heron, Yellowbilled Spoonbill, Red-kneed Dotterel, Black-winged Stilt, and Black-tailed Native Hen contributed to the water bird and wader list.

Raptors seen during the day were few and far between - I saw only one Black-shouldered Kite, one Swamp Harrier and very few Brown Falcons.

The bird total (seen and heard) was nearly seventy.

F.H.

Pat's plant list is to be found on page 9.(Ed.)

Clunes Excursion November 19 1988

We had a hot and progressively sultry day for our trip to Clunes Swamps and Fells Gully.

We approached Middle Swamp with eyes peeled for Brolgas but we were out of luck and they remained elusive the entire morning. However, we saw a pair of magnificent Swamp Harriers circling and diving also Marsh Terns, Masked Lapwings, Shelduck Pacific and whitenecked Herons and Ibis.

Near Merin Merin Swamp we saw a pair of Whistling, Kites. Donning waders and rubber boots we tackled the knee deep swamp. On a pond at the edge we had a clear view of a Blue Winged Shoveller and later a cute Pink-eared Duck family, parents and nine ducklings in all.

Many of the now deserted nests contained egg shell remains. We saw a clutch of Swamp Hen eggs, a Pink-eared Duck clutch of seven, snug beneath their down blanket, a rookery of Cormorants and Spoonbill nests and no Snakes!

We picnicked in Clunes where we were joined by more carloads.

Mad dogs and Australians (not our English friends Avis' parents) go out in the midday sun! as we did at Fells Gully.

The Sun Orchids and Lilies had succumbed to the heat long before and were now thick stands of seed heads. Spring flowering has been early this year with the dry, warm weather we have been experiencing. The Parrot Peas, Bitter Peas and Helichrysum were attractive though.

A highlight of our Fells Gully walk was seeing what we presumed to be a Pallid Cuckoo chick being fed by a pair of Yellow Tufted Honeyeaters. A Wedge Tailed Eagle and a Little Eagle were soaring together on a thermal current.

Also seen were Black Chinned, Yellow Faced, New Holland and Fuscus Honey eaters and Red Wattlebirds

Interesting Bird calls were Oriole, Crested Bellbird, Rufous Whistler and Grey Thrush.

Thank you Greg Binns for leading the throng.

J.R.B.

The Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture.

Crocodile and Crocodile Farming in Nth. Queensland
Dr. S. Garnett.

The Edward River farm is the oldest in Australia. The original idea was that farms could be used to save these animals and also as a project for the Aboriginal People.

Crocodiles appear in their art and as motifs in many of their ceremonies. The two types are the Esturine and the Fresh Water or Thompsons Crocodile. Dr Garnett was at the farm to undertake studies on the Esturine Crocodile.

The Life Cycle of the Crocodile.

They build a mound nest between December and March, building it high up on the banks where an average of 40 eggs is laid. At this stage they

are at their most vulnerable state. Up to 90% are lost through flooding each year, large Goannas and wild Pigs are predators and no doubt some are trampled by Buffaloes.

They are guarded by the females who lurk nearby. There is no trouble with predators or floods on the farms. The crocodile eggs, however, are to be handled with great care as the embryo becomes adhered to the side of the egg, because they are not turned in the nest.

The vegetation around the nests slowly breaks down releasing an acid that begins to eat away some of the shell, and also provides heat. If the eggs are at 32 to 34%c. the young Crocodiles are all males and quite bigger than those hatched at below 32% or above 34% and these will be females.

The older females tend to lay larger eggs with lower fertility. The eggs hatch after about three months and the young have an egg tooth with which they push out, and a continual squeaking encourages the others and attracts the nearby mother, who will help the young from the eggs, by gently crushing the shell with their teeth, then taking in their mouth, put them into the water.

When first born they are not fully formed and live up to to one month on the still attached egg sac.

cont.

At this stage they will be preyed upon by Birds and probably large fish.

In the farms they are protected from birds and provided with fresh water, they are then put outside still protected and still with fresh water at 30 to 31°C. as they lose heat quickly at night time. Older Crocodiles don't have this problem, they have large scales with capillary blood vessels to gather heat quickly.

As they progress they are moved to open pools with stout fences set into the ground and with an overhang on top as they can both dig and climb.

The main predators of this sized Crocodiles are bigger Crocodiles and Sharks.

There are problems catching, and a short tipped harpoon is one method used. Crocodiles are the least fit of animals and extra exertion builds up lactic acid to enormous levels.

From one third of a meter to one point five meters they are eating crabs, fish and insects, 60% of all food they eat is put into weight gain, by storing fat in the back and tail, this allows them to eat, perhaps once in two years.

Crocodiles gulp their food in large chunks. Their meat is rather like chicken to taste and is sold to some restaurants.

They live to 80 or 90 years and are a prehistoric "leftover Dinasauro".

Females start breeding when they are two to three meters in length, males at about four meters.

This was a most interesting lecture and there was a good audience of both local people and folk from other clubs. Dr. Garnett was thanked by our President Dr. Frank Harrap and we concluded an enjoyable evening with supper.

L.F.

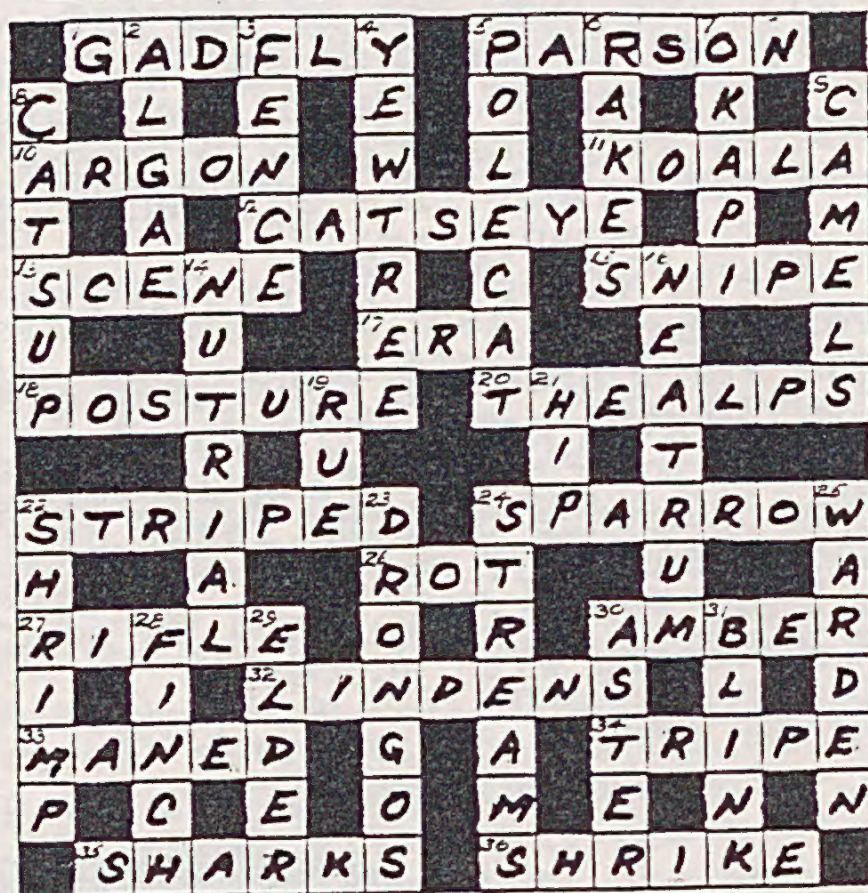


WETLANDS CONSERVATION PROGRAMME.

The Victorian Government has developed a major action programme designed to halt and if possible reverse, the decline in the States Wetlands.

It is seeking submissions relating to wetlands as part of the study which will lead to assessment and management plans. Club members who knowledge of, and ideas about the future of, high value wetlands are asked to discuss these with the Club Secretary or perhaps prepare a submission to the Department of Coservation, Forest and Lands.

Solution No 11.



Plant List:

Acacia acinacea- Gold Dust Wattle
" pycnantha- Golden Wattle
Acianthus reniformis- Mosquito Orchid
Anagallis arvensis- Blue Pimpernel
Aphanes australis- Australian Piert
Arctotheca calendula- Capeweed
Brachycome sp.
Brachyloma daphnoides- Daphne Heath
Briza maxima- Shell Grass
" minor- Lesser Quaking Grass
Bulbine bulbosa- Bulbine Lily
Caladenia catenata- Pink Fingers
" cucullata- Hooded Caladenia
" dilitata- Greencomb Spider Orchid
" gracilis- Musky Caladenia
" iridescens- Bronze Caladenia
Calochilus campestris- Copper Beard Orchid
" imberbis- Naked " "
" robertsonii- Purplish " "
Cassinia arctuata- Drooping Cassinia
Cymbonotus priessianus- Austral Bear's-ear
Eucalyptus leucoxylon- Yellow Gum
" microcarpa- Grey Box
Glossodia major- Waxlip Orchid
Helichrysum obcordatum- Grey Everlasting
" viscosum- Sticky Everlasting
Hypochoeris glabra- Smooth Cat's-ear
Hydrocotyle callicarpa- Tiny Pennywort
" laxiflora- Stinking "
Levenhookia dubia- Hairy Stylewort
Microseris scapigera- Yam Daisy
Microtis unifolia- Common Onion Orchid
Pterostylis longifolia- Tall Greenhood
Pultenaea pedunculata- Matted Bush-pea
Stackhousia monogyna- Creamy Stackhousia
Tetratheca ciliata- Pink Bells
Thelymitra antennifera- Rabbit-ears
" aristata- Great Sun Orchid
Viola hederacea- Ivy-leaf Violet

Family SOLANACEAE - continued -

The genera from this family that are found near Ballarat are :-

Datura ^x, Lycium ^x, Salpichroa ^x, Solanum ^x,
Lycopersicon ^x.

(^x indicates that the species are usually introduced)

The only native listed by C. Beauglehole is Solanum laciniatum (Large Kangaroo Apple)

The following is a key derived from that in Black's Flora of Sth. Aust. 4 ed.

1. Anthers dehiscing (shedding pollen) from terminal pores or slits
Solanum (Nightshades
Potato) ^x
1. Anthers dehiscing from slits along the whole length of the anthers
 2. Four stamens, anthers 2-celled, leaves in clusters, fruit a berry
Lycium (African Box-thorn)^x
 2. Five stamens
 3. Fruit a capsule (dry) 20 mm long with spines
Datura (Common Thorn-apple)
 3. Fruit a berry
 4. Calyx enlarged in fruit, mostly enclosing the berry. Flowers often purple or yellow. Flowers in cymes
Solanum
 4. Calyx not or scarcely enlarged in fruit
 5. Spiny shrubs; leaves sl. fleshy; corolla white to lavender; berry orange-red
Lycium
 5. Not spiny. Corolla white or yellowish
 6. Climbing or scrambling Salpichroa
(Pampus Lily-of-the-valley)^x
 6. Herbs. Leaves imparipinnate. Corolla deeply lobed, yellow Lycopersicon
(Tomato)^x

H.H.

Excursion - 6th November 1988

Mt Beckwith

On Sunday 6th November about thirty of our members travelled to Mt. Beckwith for the afternoon and evening. It was a perfect day. We were so lucky because the day before was cool and the next day was that horrible, dreadfully windy Monday. Our day was calm and warm. We hoped to find lots of open sun orchids but we didn't - we just found odd ones - salmon and blue ones.

Our first stop was to look at a large patch of dainty fairies aprons and some very tiny plants. The fairies aprons were purple and they made a lovely bright patch in some open, damp ground.

Our next stop was to look at some Spur Velleias. These yellow flowers had a spur on the underneath of each flower which is how they got their name. They were interesting.

We continued on and parked near a dam for a drink under shady trees before setting off on our main walk. There were hundreds and hundreds of chocolate lilies. There were so many that the bush looked mauve and they smelt nice too. We liked setting off the grass trigger plants and we were happy to find a couple of blue stars hiding under a bush. Milkmaids were growing well and the rabbit ears orchids were interesting to examine with a magnifying glass. There were a few purple beard orchids which are soft to pat and Mrs Hocking, Carl, Caroline, David and us two saw three lovely green comb spider orchids. We marked the track with a few arrows, but most of the adults still missed them. There were also golden moths, wax lip orchids, common flat-peas, yam daisies, sun dews, golden everlastings and onion orchids. The daphne heath bushes smelt nice and were in full flower and fairly common. We saw lots of blue pincushions not quite flowering yet. Mr Thomas said that when they are flowering that will mean that Spring is over.

One of the best things we saw was some parent birds sitting on a nest just above the track. They changed shifts while we watched. They were white-bellied cuckoo shrikes (used to be called little cuckoo shrikes). We also saw some yellow robins feeding their young.

After we had returned to our cars some people went on to another water hole to have their tea and watch the birds come in to drink but we had to go home. It was a lovely day and we enjoyed it very much.

Allison and Heather Dalman.

Dear Members,

May we take this opportunity to thank you for the support you have given to the magazine - in particular the regular contributors.

We are occasionally short of 'filler' items. (two or three liners) to utilise all the space. Please don't feel that any item is too small for inclusion.

The editor and his staff hope that you all have a very joyful Christmas shared with family and friends and that 1989 will be a year in which success attends all your endeavours.

Yours, naturally

Tony and Avis

NB. The Crossword returns next month.